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## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON IROQUOIS SILVERSMITHING

By ARTHUR C. PARKER

IN the *American Anthropologist*<sup>1</sup> for July–Sept., 1910, I endeavored to show that most of the silver brooch patterns used by the eastern Indians, particularly the Iroquois, had come from trans-atlantic sources, most probably directly from Scotland. I pointed out also that the Iroquois as late as 1865 commonly made silver brooches similar in most ways to Scotch Luckenbooth brooches, that they considered their product the result of a purely native art, and that this belief had been held by nearly all, if not all, collectors of Iroquois silver ornaments.

It may be well to state, in passing, that the Iroquois silver *ěniūs'kü'* as well as the Scotch Luckenbooth brooch was fretted out of a thin plate of silver and generally had a single tongue or pin loosely attached to one side of a central opening. The cloth was pulled through this opening sufficiently to allow the tongue to pierce it when it was drawn back and the brooch thus held securely. This form of brooch is distinctive and differs from the heavy forms with a clasp pin on the back, from the fibula, and from other forms of pin jewelry. The Luckenbooth brooch resembles a buckle more than it does a pin or fibula.

Since the publication of my former article I have come across other interesting references to silver brooches and am much indebted to Mr Alfred Ela of Boston for many citations, with particular reference to the origin of heart-shaped brooches in Europe. My article traced the European brooch from the burial mounds of East Yorkshire to Scotland. In the *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society*, vol. 6, part 1, 1910, I find, however, an article on heart brooches by Mr C. E. Whitelaw, F. S. A. Scot., in which the following statement is made: "The heart shaped brooch in various forms was in use in many countries in Western Europe, e. g. Scandanavia, Germany and England. In England it was one

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<sup>1</sup> In an article entitled "The Origin of Iroquois Silversmithing."

of the commonest forms in mediaeval times and was probably introduced about the thirteenth century. I am unable to suggest when it came into use in Scotland." Thus, as had been anticipated, the brooch referred to has been traced to the continent. The

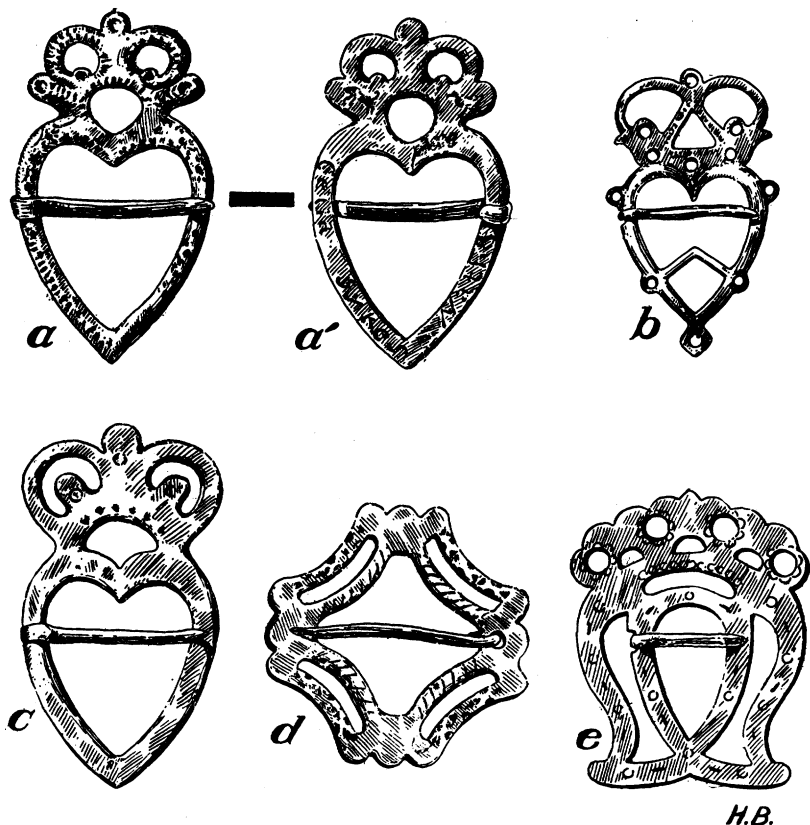


FIG. 45.—Scotch and Iroquois brooches. *a* is a Scotch brooch in the collection of the Wyoming Historical Society (Pa.). *a'* shows the reverse with an inscription. On the lower line are three forms of brooches made by the Iroquois and copied from Scotch patterns.

Scotch Luckenbooth brooches mentioned by Mr Whitelaw are described as usually of silver, often of inferior quality, and sometimes set with natural crystals or glass and occasionally with brass or

copper. Such brooches are described as having been cast in moulds and finished by hand. On these specimens the maker's initials or the place of manufacture are often found. The face is usually engraved and many times the reverse bears an inscription, a posy, the names of its owners, or the name of a donor and recipient. This last named form is generally found to be a marriage or a love token (see fig. 45). Any brooch pinned to the garment of a child was regarded by the Scotch as an efficient charm against witches, hence the name "witch brooches" was often applied.

When the Iroquois silversmiths copied the Scotch patterns they left off many things that were common in the original pattern and interpreted the design as their own education, environment, or customs dictated. The Iroquois many times fastened bits of glass to the brooches but never cast them. Their method was uniformly to fret them out of sheet silver or beaten coins, as previously described.

The most common forms of loose-tongued fret-work brooches in use in Great Britain as far as I have discovered from reviewing descriptions and illustrations, are the circle, the simple heart, the heart with the apex curved to one side, the simple heart crowned either by a coronet or thistle, the elaborated heart and highly conventional crown, and two hearts intertwined and crowned. Very probably the simple square was also used. All these forms and many others are found in Iroquois-made brooches of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Iroquois brooches in their workmanship are distinctive. With them the thistle top was a bird's tail and in their brooches they lengthened the thistle and drew parallel lines to represent feathers. The Iroquois recognized the intertwined hearts to be such but called them "two jaws interlocked." Unlike the Scotch brooch of this type they did not place a tongue on each heart but fastened one across the central opening. Mr Harrington in his paper on silversmithing<sup>1</sup> remarks that the Iroquois use this brooch (see fig. 45, *e*) as a national badge and this is quite true. The Iroquois traveler, faithful to the precedents of his sires of the older days, generally fastens a double heart brooch to his coat or vest as an emblem of his nationality and as a

<sup>1</sup> *Anthropological Papers of the Am. Mus. of Nat. Hist.*, vol. I, part VI.

hailing sign to the wanderers of his tribe. Never does he suspect that the motif of his emblem is anything but a genuine product of



FIG. 46.—Pocahontas and her son Thomas Rolfe. From a painting in Heacham Hall, England, the home of the Rolfe family. (Reproduced by courtesy of Lathrop, Lee and Shephard.)

his own ancestors and thus a worthy token of his aboriginality. In it he never dreams of the canny Scot of earlier times.

Another type of brooch in common use by the Iroquois is the "council square," a quadrilateral pattern with concaved sides and notched corners, one square within another (fig. 45, *d*). This form I have not yet seen in works illustrating the silver ornaments of Great Britain but it appears in a painting of Pocahontas and her son Thomas Rolfe hung in Heacham Hall, England, which must have been painted not later than 1611. Figure 46 is a reproduction of the painting.<sup>1</sup> Crowned single hearts appear also, the two forms being attached to the low cut neck of the dress and fastening the front all the way down just as Iroquois women later commonly wore them.

In the center of the neck border is a particularly interesting brooch (see fig. 47). It is one clearly of Masonic import and shows the compasses, the arc of the circle, and the square supported by pillars. Near the top, bottom as worn, is another smaller decoration which seems a small right angle or square. As worn the brooch is inverted and it is interesting to note that the Iroquois almost always wore conventionalized Masonic emblems upside down. The small right angle may be a square but apparently it is only a device commonly found at the bottom of Scotch heart and crown brooches (see fig. 45*b*).

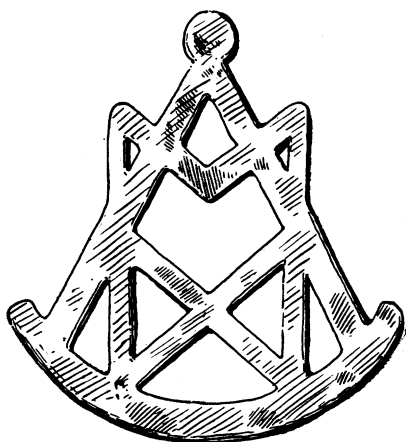


FIG. 47.—Detail of Masonic brooch shown in the painting of Pocahontas.

It has never been clearly understood by students of Iroquois ethnology just when the Masonic pattern came into vogue with the Iroquois. Brant was a Mason and other leaders have been claimed as such, but the Iroquois had plenty of opportunities before that time of seeing the Masonic emblem as displayed by the Scotch and English traders and explorers that came among them. The

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by courtesy of Lathrop, Lee and Shephard, Boston, from *The American Indian*, by E. S. Brooks.

Masonic emblem worn by Pocahontas as an ornament, shown in the painting referred to, would seem to point out that the Atlantic coast Indians influenced by British colonists had seen the emblem as early as the settlement of Jamestown. Later this emblem was used by the Iroquois as a decorative motif in their silver ornaments and was conventionalized in many ways. In almost all cases, however, they regarded the bottom of the design as the top and thus placed the arc of the circle at the top and the joint of the compasses at the bottom. In this position the arc and the square resembled somewhat the crown on a heart brooch, while the round hinge of the compasses resembled the knob at the lower point of the heart on Scotch brooches (see fig. 45, *b*). Because of this fancied similarity the "Queen Mary's heart" design and the Masonic emblem became blended in the conventionalized patterns that grew out of both motifs. How the idea of similarity might develop may be understood by inverting figure 48, *a* and *b*, and comparing them with the heart brooch in figure 45, *b*. Here the openings in the crown—with the Iroquois, the eyes of the owl—are suns and moons in the Masonic design and the arc of the circle is construed as a plain top of the crown—with the Iroquois, the owl's head. Then are there only three small differences: in the heart (owl) pattern the sides are curved while the sides of the compasses are straight; the apex of the heart is pointed in Iroquois brooches or rarely there is a small bird's head, while the top of the compasses terminates in a circular hinge; and in the heart the triangular opening at the middle of the base of the crown points downward to give a symmetrical border to the heart, while in the Masonic type the angle of the square points upward (viewed in the reversed position). In the Scotch crowned hearts, as previously mentioned, the heart sometimes has at its apex a knob or trifoliated projection which might easily be interpreted as similar in import to the head of the compasses. These differences only accentuate the similarity of the two forms as viewed by the Indians.

The simpler form of the Masonic emblem as employed by the Iroquois is shown in the Iroquois-made brooch illustrated in figure 48, *a*. Apparently it is a copy of some past master's jewel. Figure 48, *b*, is nearly the same except that for the sake of balance the sun

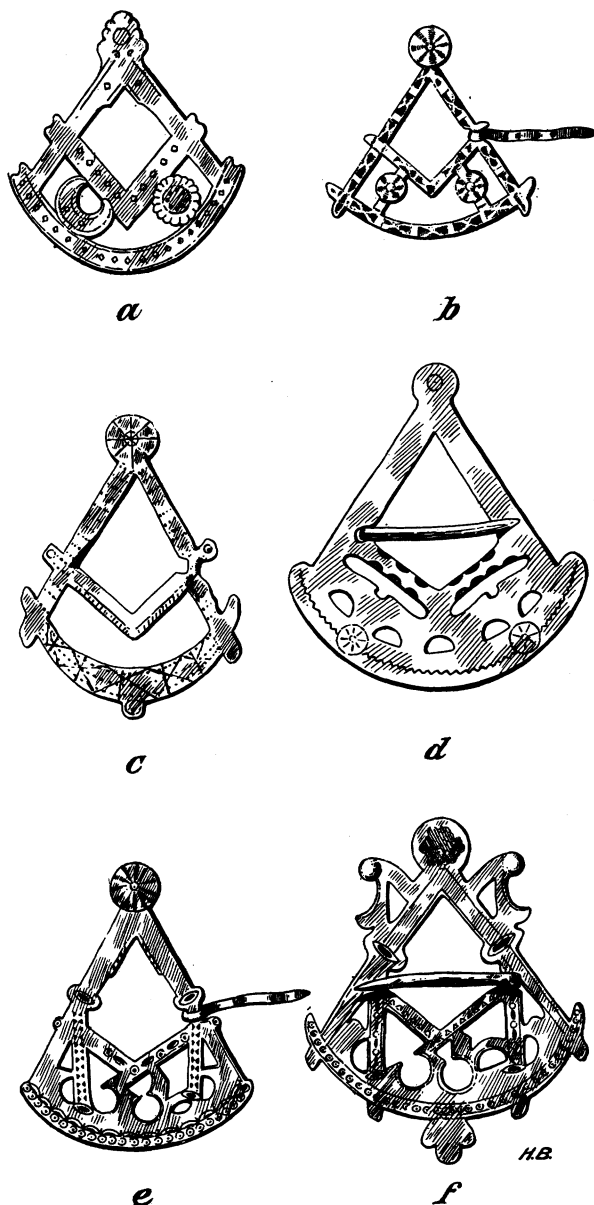


FIG. 48.—The simpler forms of Iroquois silver brooches of the Masonic motif.

and the moon have been turned into suns without rays. In 48, *c*, the sun and moon are lacking and we have what appears to be a try-



square. In figure 48, *d*, the space between the square and the arc has been left filled but the decorations which are fretted out still leave the arc and the square untouched. The suns here appear only engraved. Figure 48, *e*, represents another type and one similar to the Pocahontas brooch. The small pillars here appear and though they are conventionalized they may be recognized. In this brooch the arc of the circle does not appear free though its upper side is distinguished by decorations that outline it. Above the arc in the next figure (48, *f*), are odd designs punched out. They are similar, varying little in shape, in all brooches of this type. In fig. 48, *f*, as in fig. 48, *e*, the first fretwork design inside the base of the pillar might appear to be a trowel but this is probably not the case. More likely these fanciful outlines are only the result of an attempt to punch five circles at regular intervals and at the same time to leave the square free and not to break into any other part of the design. In figure 48, *f*, the conventionalized pillars rise above and through the compasses and are attached to them at the top. On the bars of the compasses where the pillars intercept them are the Iroquois seed or "life" symbols.

A second stage of modification of this motif is shown in figure 49, *a*. Here the bars (legs of the compasses) are doubled and paralleled. This doubling the Iroquois call *dēio'wānge*, "two parallel lines." The idea of "doubling" probably originated from the "council square" brooch such as is represented in figure 45, *d*. In figure 49, *b*, is the ordinary "wolf-eared council fire" brooch of the Seneca, the interlaced bars representing the fagots of the fire. In figure 49, *c*, the fagots are shown and the flame bursting from the top (bottom as illustrated). In these patterns the arc as a feature almost disappears. Figure 49, *d*, shows the brooch with the arc metamorphosed to double and parallel squares. This is wrought by combining the original concept with the square-within-a-square council brooch (see fig. 45, *d*).

Another departure from the original motif is shown in figure 49, *e*. The pattern is rather more pleasing in its lines than the former and there are no prominent straight lines in it. In figure 49, *f*, it is even more difficult to recognize the Masonic motif than it is in figure 49, *e*. The Iroquois call the brooch represented in figure 49, *f*, the *oskwi'sā'*

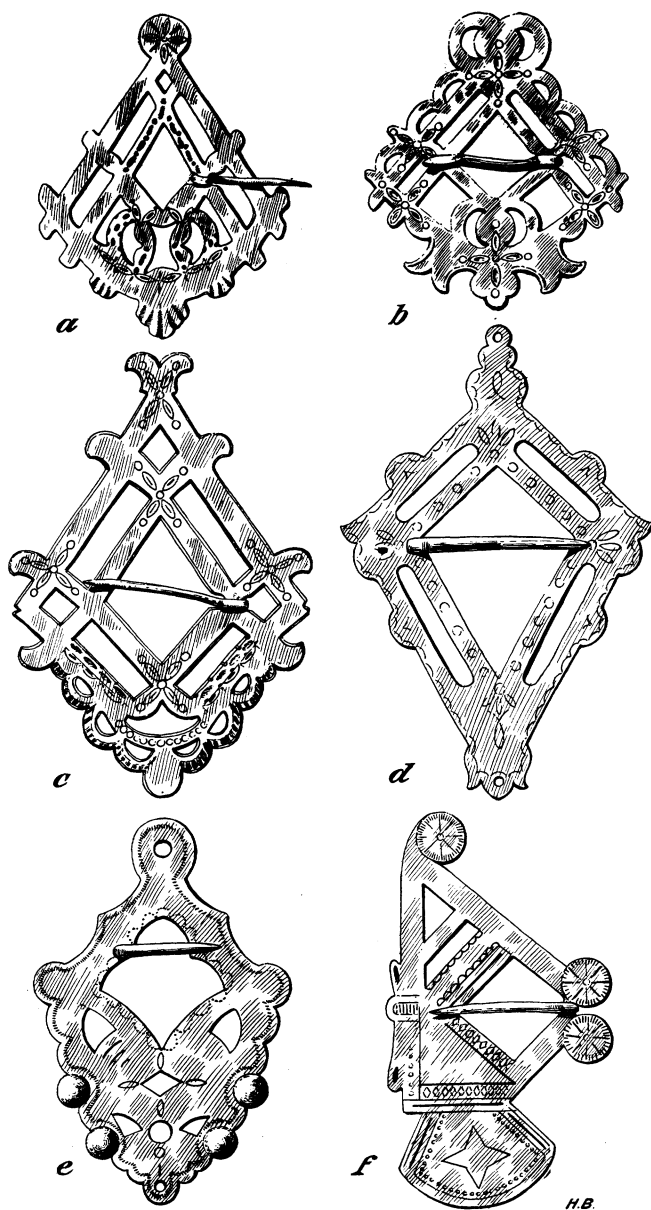


FIG. 49.—The more elaborate forms of Iroquois silver brooches of the Masonic motif.

or tomahawk. It appears to have been obtained by perpendicularly halving the Masonic design. Looking at it in this way, one leg of the compasses, the joint, and one arm of the square may be seen, while the blade of the tomahawk may or may not be derived from the arc of the circle.

This series of brooches affords a good illustration of how an original motif may become conventionalized and modified by other similar objects until the original design becomes almost unrecognizable.

Among other styles of Iroquois brooches are various forms of the star and circle. Ornamented stars of five, six, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve points are enclosed in a decorated circular border, generally with scalloped edges. Hardly two brooches of similar pattern appear identical when the details of fretwork and engraving are closely examined. When stars appear without the enclosing band the points terminate in knobs or hemispheres. The circular or disk brooches are most frequently convex on the front surface and the pin hole is usually circular, though heart-shaped, and square openings occur in some instances. The square central opening is most often found in brooches where the "council square" motif is worked inside a circular border.

Iroquois circular and disk brooches are different from the so called "Algonquin" or "Delaware" types. Such are saucer-shaped, sometimes quite deep, or simply convex on the upper surface. The former are generally small and plain with the central opening at the bottom of the saucer. The disk type is often large, those six inches in diameter being frequent. Brooches of this form, however, are stamped and engraved and seldom fretted. The workmanship of the Iroquois-made brooch is superior to the products of other tribes and may easily be distinguished.

Purely native patterns are extremely rare and the occasional example is found to be zoöomorphic. The Iroquois silversmith preferred to cling to a motif as he found it and though he had ample opportunity to create his own designs few examples have been discovered. There seem to be certain reasons for this and the circumstance affords a text for more than a single venture.

If brooches of the loose-tongued buckle type were common

in Great Britain at the time of the discovery of America there is a possibility that they might have crept into the trader's store of more precious things and thus have worked their way into the esteem of the Indians at a comparatively early period. If the painting of Pocahontas is contemporaneous, as I am assured it is, the brooches represented on her dress would seem to confirm this and indicate that the Indians might have had brooches from traders and colonists as early as 1607. As a matter of fact, however, they do not appear to have become familiar articles with the Indians until after the beginning of the eighteenth century, and then not until the end of the first quarter. They are not found in Indian graves before this period as far as I have been able to discover.

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